

got to see some places where you had succeeded in changing the course of the fire and limiting its reach, and I appreciate that very much. I know that Mother Nature will burn in our forests one way or the other, but it matters how it happens. It matters that people don't die. It matters that property is saved. It matters that precious and irreplaceable things are saved. And you're doing that.

I know a lot of the firefighters have been working here for weeks and weeks, and probably for months. Given all the problems we've had with wildfires this summer, you probably know we've already lost 4 million acres, which is about twice the 10-year average, before this. So we're in for a rough summer, and I know how hard it is on you.

I'd also like to say a special word of appreciation to the people from the military who have come up from Fort Hood to teach you that one loud word in the English language. [Laughter] And I heard there are some marines here, too, somewhere, doing some work in this area, and I thank them. But obviously, I'm especially proud of this group from Fort Hood because their leader, Lieutenant Colonel Dell Williams, was my Army military aide before he got a real job with you guys. I told him today I was glad to see him having to do real work after having that White House job for a good while. But it didn't do him any permanent harm.

So I thank you for your service. And I thank you for the work you're doing together. We're going to release today about \$150 million in emergency funds to help continue to fight the fire and to help restore the area afterward. And I hope that restoration work will also lead to some jobs for the people in this area who have been disadvantaged by this fire.

And I have asked the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to undertake an intensive 90-day study and report back to me about what can be done to minimize the impact of wildfires like this, because this thing was pretty well—thanks to most of you who have been doing this for years—this whole issue was much more in hand over the last 10 years. And this has been a difficult year. And most of the people I talk to think that the next 2 or 3 years could also be difficult years. So we want to do whatever we can

to make sure that we take care of the people, as well as the natural resource.

But the main thing I did—I just wanted to get in the plane this morning and fly here and say thanks. I know this is hard, and I know a lot of you are a long way from home. I know some of you have to get, almost, permission to go back to where you come from just so you can pay the bills and keep them from turning off the water and the electricity.

But I want you to know that your fellow Americans appreciate it. These fires have been very well publicized, and the American people know how they're being fought and who is fighting them. And you need to know that we're proud of you, and we're grateful to you.

I know there was a terrible fatality, and there is a funeral today, and our prayers are with the family of the man who lost his life. This is hard, and I know it. And the main thing I wanted to do was just hop on Air Force One this morning at 6 o'clock so I could come over here and say thanks. You've done a good thing for your country and a good thing for your fellow Americans.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:55 a.m. in the Fire Incident Command Post in Payette National Forest. In his remarks, he referred to Scott Vail, incident commander, National Interagency Incident Management System Team One, who presented the President with a firefighter's axe; and Dave Alexander, forest supervisor, Payette National Forest.

Statement on the Decline in Teen Birth Rates

August 8, 2000

I am very encouraged by new data released today by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention showing that teen birth rates in the United States have reached their lowest level since record keeping began 60 years ago. These preliminary data for 1999 show that birth rates among 15 to 19 year olds dropped 3 percent from the previous year and 20 percent from the most recent peak in 1991.

This new information confirms that we continue to make impressive strides in addressing one of the most important social problems facing our Nation. By enacting welfare reform in 1996, taking executive action to require young mothers to stay in school or lose welfare payments, cracking down on child support enforcement, and launching a national campaign to prevent teen pregnancy, the Clinton-Gore administration has sent a clear message to young women and young men alike: Don't get pregnant or father a child until you are ready to take on the responsibility of parenthood. Working in partnership with States, communities, families, religious leaders, the media, and teens themselves, we have promoted innovative teen pregnancy prevention strategies that have contributed to the historic progress we witness today.

These encouraging trends cut across both younger and older teens, married and unmarried teens, all States, and all racial and ethnic groups. The sharpest decline last year was a 6 percent drop in the birth rate for American Indian teenagers. And since 1991, the African-American teen birth rate has decreased by 30 percent. Together, we are helping more young people make responsible choices and delay parenting until they are financially and emotionally ready.

However, we still have much to do, and I urge all sectors of society to continue their efforts to reduce teen pregnancy even further. To build on our progress in breaking the cycle of dependency, I call on Congress to enact my budget initiative to provide \$25 million to support "second-chance homes." These adult-supervised, supportive living arrangements for teen parents who cannot live at home offer parenting skills, job counseling, education, and other referrals that help reduce repeat pregnancies and improve the prospects for young mothers and their children.

Statement on Productivity Growth

August 8, 2000

Today's announcement that productivity rose at a 5.3 percent annual rate last quarter is a remarkable confirmation of the contin-

ued strength and vitality of the U.S. economy. Over the past 3 years, productivity has grown 3.3 percent annually—more than twice the growth rate of the previous two decades. Rising productivity has been the key to the combination of strong growth, rising wages, and low core inflation underlying our record economic expansion. Today's news is further evidence that our commitment to fiscal discipline, opening markets, and investing in people has helped lead to an unprecedented era of business investment, innovation, and technological advance that is providing new opportunities for millions of Americans.

This continuing productivity growth underscores the importance of maintaining the fiscal discipline that has been so crucial to this investment-led economic expansion. The majority in Congress continues to pursue a series of misguided tax breaks which, taken together, would bring America back to the era of deficits and knock us off the path of fiscal discipline that has led to this prosperity. Their approach is wrong for America. Let's work together to ensure that our strong economy will continue to grow.

Statement on Signing Legislation To Expand Women's Rights National Historical Park

August 8, 2000

I am pleased today to sign S. 1910, bipartisan legislation to expand the Women's Rights National Historical Park, in Seneca Falls and Waterloo, New York, with the addition of the home of Jane Hunt. In 1848 early supporters of women's rights, meeting at Hunt's home, resolved to convene the Nation's first women's rights convention. A century and a half later, the addition of the Hunt House to the historical park is a fitting tribute to all those who have engaged in the struggle for women's rights. With this legislation, this historic home will be purchased by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and donated to the National Park Service. Jane Hunt made a tremendous difference in the lives of American women, and this legislation will ensure that her efforts are remembered and honored in the years ahead.